

# Lindane

February 2001  
Fact Sheet

Pesticide Program  
Office of Environmental Health & Safety

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. If you have any questions about the use of this product or think that you may have lice, consult a health care provider.*



## What is lindane?

Lindane:

- is a chemical that kills insects, including head lice.
- was the active ingredient in Kwell lice shampoo, which is no longer sold. Generic lindane is still available by prescription for head lice.

## What are the concerns about using lindane?

- Shampoo with lindane can be dangerous if swallowed, especially for children.
- Illness from exposure to lindane is possible if directions are not closely followed or if lindane is used repeatedly.
- It appears that lindane is not as effective against lice as it once was.
- Lindane may cause side effects in certain people. For this reason, Lindane is not recommended for use on:
  - Ø people who have had seizures
  - Ø individuals known to be sensitive to lindane
  - Ø anyone with cuts, sores, or wounds in the area to be treated
  - Ø children under two years old
  - Ø pregnant or nursing women.

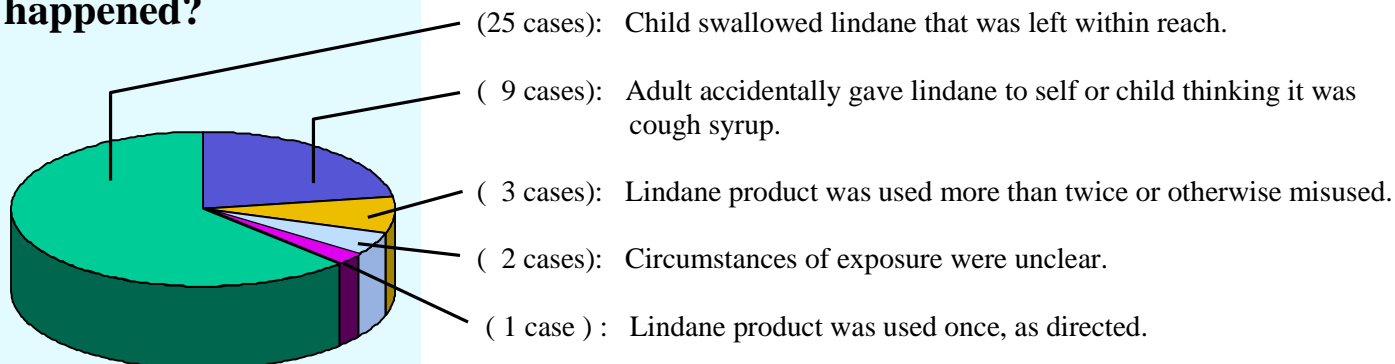
## What symptoms have been linked to lindane exposure?

During a nine-year period (1991-1999) in Washington State, 40 known cases of people exposed to lindane lice or scabies products were referred to Washington State Department of Health, Pesticide Program (which tracks cases of illness due to pesticide exposure). Of those 40 people, 15 developed some symptoms:

- 3 had seizures and required hospitalization.
- Others reported symptoms such as agitation, headache, mental confusion, hallucinations, and/or loss of short-term memory.
- Some people had sudden vomiting after accidentally swallowing lindane

## How have exposures happened?

Of the 40 reported cases of exposure to lindane from 1991-1999 (WA State):



## How can I safely control head lice?

One of the safest and most effective methods for controlling head lice is combing hair with a good lice comb (one with 3 or 4 rows of closely-spaced metal teeth). For more information on this and other methods, please visit the following web sites:

- Video on “*Removing Head Lice Safely*”, may be viewed on line at: <http://www.ci.lincoln.ne.us/city/mayor/cic/5citytv/video.htm>
- <http://www.metrokc.gov/health/prevcont/headlice.htm>
- <http://schoolipm.ifas.ufl.edu/doc/liceipm.pdf>
- [http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/factsht\\_head\\_lice\\_treating.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dpd/parasites/lice/factsht_head_lice_treating.htm)

## What safety precautions should be taken if we decide to use lindane?

- ✓ Keep all lindane products out of the reach of children, and mark them with a Mr. Yuk sticker. Mr. Yuk stickers can be ordered from poison control centers.
- ✓ Read all safety precautions and follow directions exactly.
- ✓ Lindane is not recommended for people who have had seizures, for individuals who are known to be sensitive to lindane, or for people with cuts, sores, or wounds in the area to be treated. CDC (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) also advises against its use on children under two years old or on pregnant or nursing women.
- ✓ Do not apply lindane immediately after a hot bath or shower; avoid use of oil-based hair conditioners or other oil treatments immediately before or after using lindane shampoo (because these can increase the absorption of lindane through the skin).
- ✓ If lindane does not work, do not reapply. Seek another method of lice control.

## What should I do if my child swallows lindane?

Immediately call the Poison Control Center in your area. In Washington State, the number is 1-800-732-6985.

For further information on poisoning prevention, visit the American Association of Poison Control Centers at : [www.aapcc.org](http://www.aapcc.org)

For more information about lindane or other lice-killing agents, please contact:

Washington State Department of Health  
Pesticide Program (360) 236-3360  
[barbara.morrissey@doh.wa.gov](mailto:barbara.morrissey@doh.wa.gov)

*(The Pesticide Program at DOH tracks cases of illness due to pesticide exposure).*